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ABSTRACT

Given that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) seems to stress national identity and the importance of developing Canadian perspectives on world events, this study examines whether the CBC practices "Afghanistanism," i.e., the tendency to be more critical when reporting, reviewing, or commenting on news events and personalities in foreign nations than when reporting upon national matters. Twelve government-subsidized, half hour radio news programs produced by the CBC entitled "The World at Six" were tape recorded for content analysis. Coders then evaluated each discrete item of the newscasts, finding a total of 156 news items for the analysis that followed. The data tend to support the contention that the CBC practices "Afghanistanism" in its radio news reporting, although limitations of sample and method of analysis urge caution in accepting these findings without further investigation.
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TESTING THE "AFGHANISTANISM" HYPOTHESIS:

THE CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION NEWS

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TESTING THE "AFGHANISTANISM" HYPOTHESIS:

THE CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION NEWS

J. Anthony Lukas, a senior editor to /MORE/ magazine and a former New York Times international correspondent to Africa, has described a deficiency of the press known as "Afghanistanism."[1] That deficiency, Pulitzer Prize winner Lukas explains, is the tendency for news media to be more critical (and sometimes, scathing) when it comes to reporting upon faraway events, personalities and nations than when reviewing or commenting on news and personalities closer to home. "Afghanistanism" represents a "vastly liberating" form of frankness, Lukas asserts, because the reporter and press manager are more willing to report the unfavorable, which may malign persons from "exotica,"[2] reasoning that their critical reports will never come to the attention of those maligned persons or nations anyway. And for a variety of reasons, including the possible loss of a cozy relationship with good news sources, many newspersons are unwilling to take the same liberties with those sources which are geographically and psychologically closer to home, Lukas claims.

As described by Lukas, the "Afghanistanism" tendency in national and international news reporting seems to include at least three elements or assertions:

1. A preference for local, regional and national news,
2. marked by more favorable treatment of local, regional and national items than of foreign news items, and
3. a more balanced treatment of local, regional and national news items than of foreign news items.

The author wishes to express his appreciation to L. Erwin Atwood, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, who read and commented on this paper.

In general, the "Afghanistanism" statement asserts that as geographical distance increases between the source of news and the location where the news is consumed, the message will be less favorable to the news source or event and less balanced (that is, will not depict more than one facet or aspect of the event or person).[3] Lukas' formulation assumes there will be no prior censorship by the nation from which the reporter files the critical report. In practice, this is not always the case. Howe (1966) notes that African countries generally do not exercise regulatory controls and censorship, except for Ghana. However, Howe says "resident correspondents in nearly all the African capitals are subject to some pressure" and "pressures in Africa, outside of Ghana and the settler and Arab tips of the continent, are markedly less than in many parts of the Middle East, Asia, or Latin America."[4] Especially in times of national emergency, the foreign nation is likely to impose controls on stories written by foreign correspondents, as was the case when Prime Minister Indira Ghandi imposed many restrictions on foreign newsmen during India's Constitutional crisis of summer, 1975.

It is not clear that all or even most mass news media exercise the sort of "Afghanistanism" described. The question raised in this report is whether a news disseminator from Canada is more likely to treat the U. S. and other foreign countries in an "Afghanistanism" manner than it is of home news and views. Twelve government-subsidized one-half hour radio news programs produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Société Radio-Canada) entitled "The World at Six" were recorded for content analysis during the period from June 5 to June 20, 1975. The CBC news program, originating in Toronto, used a newscaster team format, occasionally drawing upon filed voice reports from correspondents and freelance broadcasters, as well as actualities (the actual voices of newsmakers, persons and situations in the news). The program was carried

by 25 CBC owned and operated stations and from 45 to 50 network affiliated AM radio stations throughout Canada.[5]

Canada at the turn of the decade had 395 AM and FM radio stations, 45 of which were owned and operated by the CBC and 119 others of which were affiliated with the CBC.[6] In such a vast area with relatively few persons, Canada has placed a premium on the importance of its radio broadcasting, which reaches an estimated 99 percent of the population of about 22 million persons. The Davey Commission (a special Canadian Senate committee on mass media) has said, "In the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, from the late 1930s onward, Canada saw the development of a broadcasting agency unique in the world -- publicly owned, broadcasting domestically in two languages, using the facilities of private broadcasters to transmit programmes beyond the ability of a small local broadcaster to produce." An important CBC focus has been a strong ethnocentric nationalism: "The CBC is a national communications medium ... offering service to all but a tiny minority of Canadians in both official languages. It has striven to develop Canadian talent, to reveal Canadians to one another, to strengthen the fabric of Canadian society."[7] As part of this nationalistic booster function served by the CBC, correspondents are maintained "in some international bureaux" such as Paris, Washington and London. Among the recommendations and suggestions of the Davey Commission was this admonition to the Canadian press: "Think some more about the advantages of direct Canadian reporting from the world's news centres, so that the news we get from abroad is told by observers who speak our language. We've calculated the costs; it is impossible to compute the benefits."[8] Thus, it would seem that the Canadian CBC news is a likely purveyor of "Afghanistanism" news, an assumption which this study tests.

METHOD

Individual one-half hour CBC radio programs were tape recorded for later playback and content analysis. Coders evaluated each discrete item of a newscast (there were an average of 15 items per one-half hour program) into these broad areas:

Item topic, which contained 26 categories, including economic news, sensational news, news of crime and prisons, news of war and peacekeeping, news of energy and environment, news concerning the working of social institutions, and news relevant to human services and welfare.

Item location, designating the position within the broadcast sequence, (for example, first of 15, third of 12).

Item length, or the time of each item in seconds.

Means of item reportage, whether by the newscaster alone, the newscaster with a correspondent/freelance broadcaster, the newscaster and an actuality, or all of these.

Item favorableness, the degree to which the item was favorable or unfavorable to the nation most featured in the news item. Categories varied from "very favorable" to "very unfavorable."[9]

Item balance, measured two ways. First, the number of identifiable and attributed news sources excluding the newscaster, was coded. Second, coders counted the number of numerical facts cited to substantiate the news peg of the news item.

Nature of the information source, measured five ways, whether the information was attributed to: (1) a report or written material, (2) a large organization (nongovernment), (3) the government, or government representative, (4) a small group or organization, or (5) an individual with no group tie or role relevant to the item.

A total of 184 items from 12 complete broadcasts (June 5 to June 20) were coded. Intercoder reliability scores for the content analysis averaged .72 for three coders, which can be interpreted as the extent to which coding reliability exceeds chance.[10]

FINDINGS

The independent variable in the "Afghanistanism" hypothesis clearly would be geographical distance involved in news reporting (that is, the total distance from the nation where the news item originates to the nation where the news item is consumed by a person in the media audience). The major dependent variable would be the item favorableness. The major hypothesis implied by Lukas is: the greater the distance, the less favorable the news item. Because of the modest sample analyzed in this report, a simple dichotomy is used to test the hypothesis. CBC radio news items solely concerned with Canada are contrasted with items for all other nations and continents combined in cross-break tables with the dependent variables. The analysis is based on 156 CBC radio news items (items referring to combinations of nations were not in-

Table 1. Nation featured in CBC radio news item by item favorableness.

Favorableness	Canadian News Items (N = 92)	News Items Regarding Other Nations (N = 64)
Favorable (N = 13)	5.4%	12.5%
Neutral (N = 52)	35.9	29.7
Unfavorable (N = 85)	57.6	50.0
Strongly Unfavorable (N = 6)	1.1	7.8
	100.0%	100.0%

$x^2 = 7.54$; DF = 3; $.10 > p > .05$ two-tailed test; Contingency Coefficient, C = .21

cluded). These data are intended to be primarily suggestive, pending a larger and more systematic sample of news items.

As shown in Table 1, news items tend to cluster in either the "neutral" or "unfavorable" categories, with Canadian news items showing this tendency more than non-Canadian items. Canadian news items tend to be less "extreme"; that is, either "favorable" or "strongly unfavorable." Because the distribution of items does not fit the directional hypothesis in all particulars, a two-tailed test (which approaches significance) is indicated. Table 1 also reveals that Canadian items are aired more frequently on the CBC radio news (59 percent of all items dealt with Canada, $X^2 = 5.03$, $p < .05$, two-tailed test; DF = 1), compared with items regarding other nations or continents. Of the sampled news items, 18.6 percent dealt with the United States alone.

Table 2. Nation featured in CBC radio news item by item prominence.

Prominence	Canadian News Items (N = 92)	News Items Regarding Other Nations (N = 64)
High (Item located first through fifth in newscast; N = 52)	38.0%	26.6%
Mid (Item located sixth through tenth in newscast; N = 50)	34.8	28.1
Low (Item located eleventh through 21st in newscast; N = 54)	27.2	45.3
	100.0%	100.0%

$X^2 = 5.60$; DF = 2; $p < .05$ one-tailed test; Contingency Coefficient, C = .19

Table 2 shows that Canadian news items tend to receive greater prominence in the newscast location than news items regarding other nations. This finding may be shown graphically, as follows:

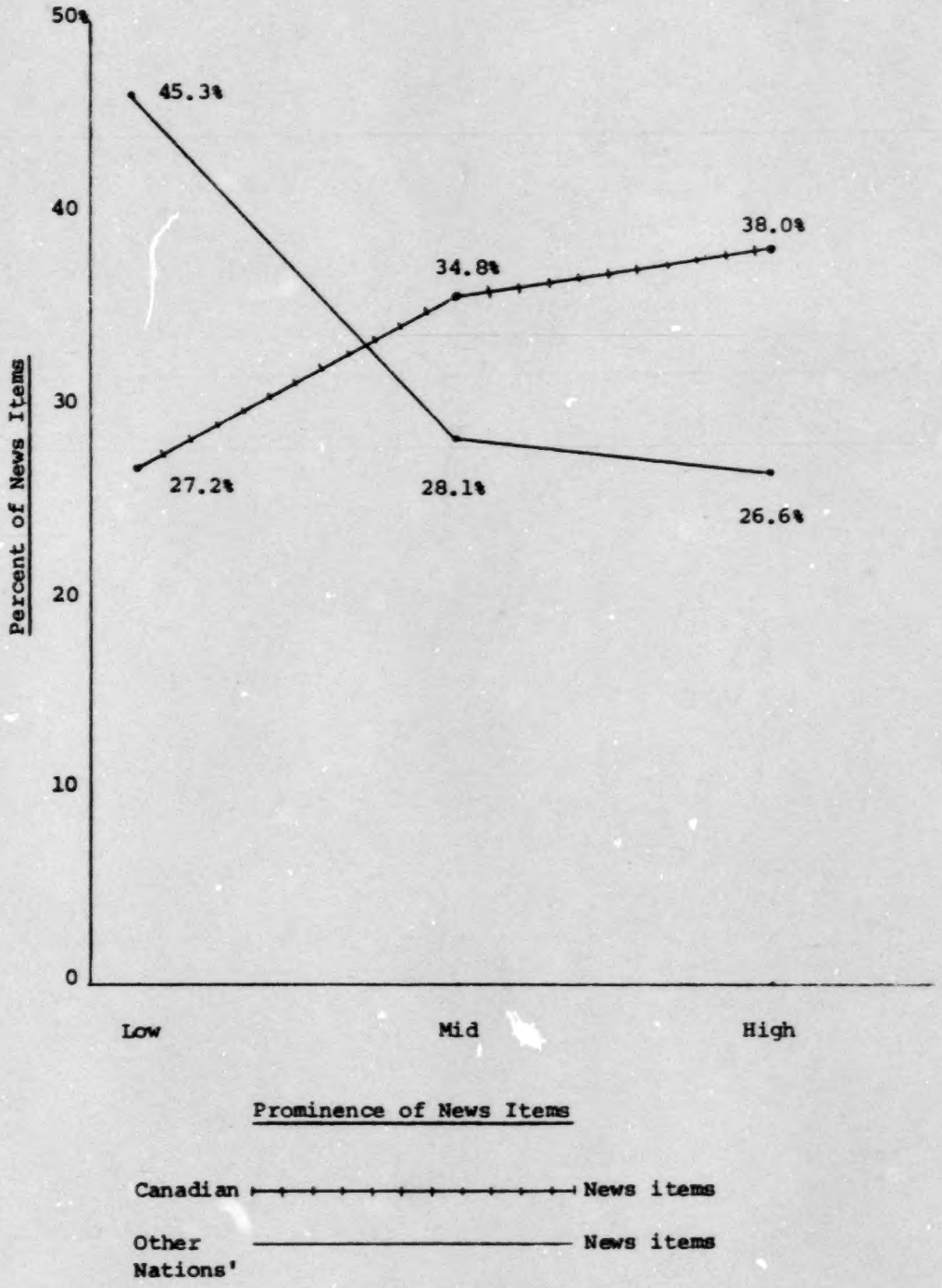

Figure 1. Nation featured in CBC Radio News Item by Item Prominence

Table 3. Nation featured in CBC radio news item by number of news sources cited in news item.

Number of news sources cited in news item	Canadian News Items (N = 92)	News Items Regarding Other Nations (N = 64)
High (5 to 16) N = 30	26.1%	9.4%
Mid (3 to 4) N = 53	30.4	39.1
Low (1 to 2) N = 73	43.5	51.6
	100.0%	100.1%*

$X^2 = 6.84$; DF = 2; $p < .025$ one-tailed test; Contingency Coefficient, C = .20.

*Percentages do not equal 100.0% because of rounding error.

As shown in Table 3, there is a tendency for more CBC radio news items about Canada to cite a larger number of news sources than are mentioned in CBC news items about other nations. Graphically, this can be shown as found in Figure 2.

The overall findings are summarized on page 10.

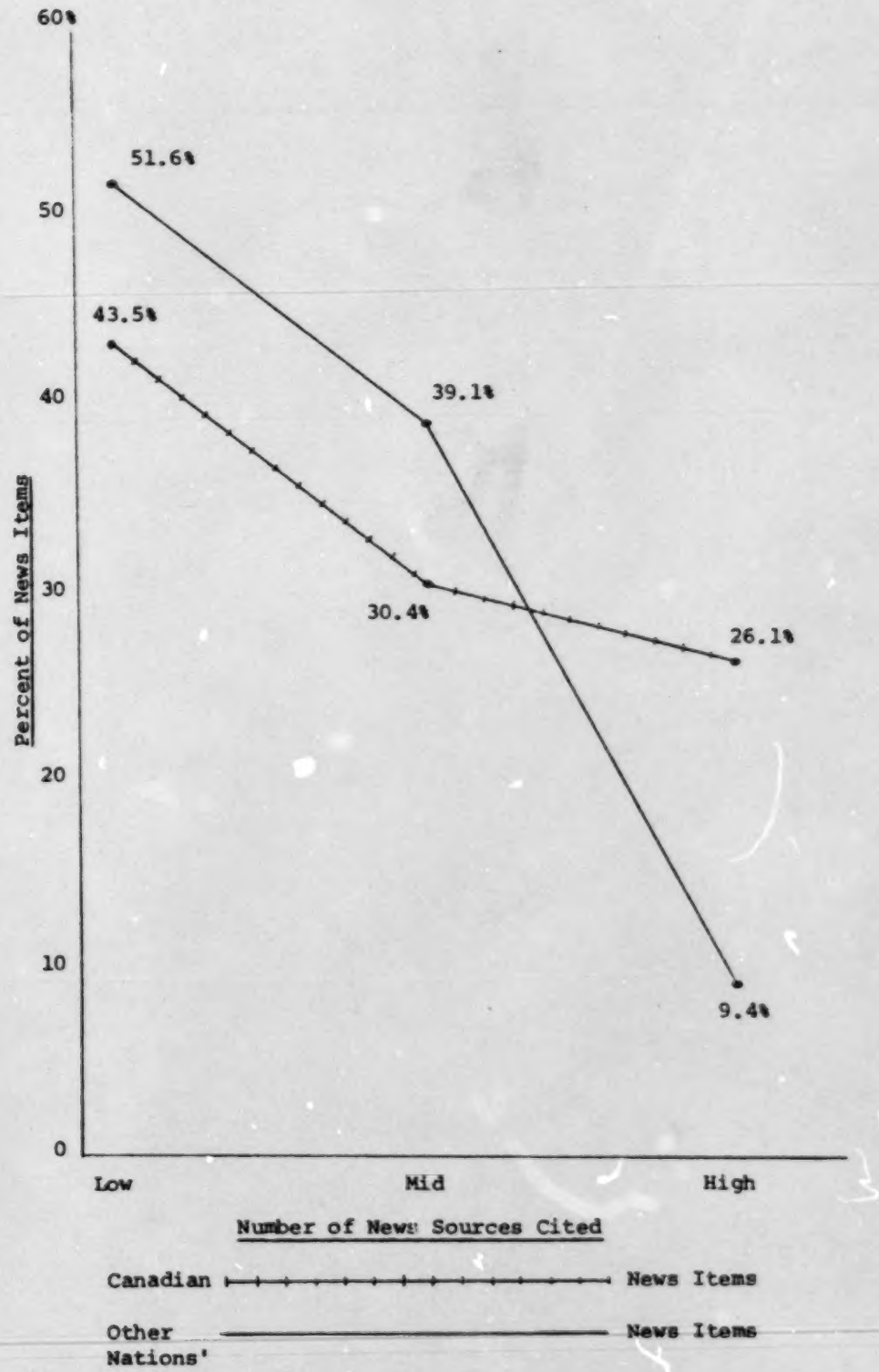

Figure 2. Nation featured in CBC Radio News Item by Number of News Sources Cited

Summary of Statistics from Contingency Analysis Testing "Afghanistan

potheses.

Posited Relationship between nation featured in news items, and:	x^2 (chi square)	C	Level Signific
Table 1. Item favorableness	7.54	.21	.10 > p >
Item frequency	5.03		p <
Table 2. Item prominence	5.60	.19	p <
Table 3. Number of sources	6.84	.20	p <
Table 4. Item length	3.78	.15	.10 > p >
Table 5. Number numerical facts (number of numbers)	3.81	.15	.10 > p >
Table 6. Complexity of reportage	2.51	.13	.10 > p >

* = one-tailed test; ** = two-tailed test. C = Contingency Coeffici

DF = degrees of freedom

Data in Tables 2 through 6 are in the direction suggested by the stanism" hypothesis. The data in Tables 1, 4, 5 and 6 (see also the approach statistical significance. Three sets of data are statistica ficant, involving the relationship between nations featured in the ne and (1) the frequency of items, (2) the news item's prominence, as we (3) the number of news sources cited in the news item.

CONCLUSIONS

Lukas no doubt addressed his "Afghanistanism" hypothesis primarily to reports carried by United States news media about other nations. This study, based on Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio news program "The World At Six," gives some support to the "Afghanistanism" hypothesis, as seen from a different national perspective. Thus, there is some basis for believing that news media will feature more prominently a larger number of items which concentrate on news occurring closer to home, and that such news items will be reported using a larger number of news sources. Additional evidence suggests that the CBC radio news program items concerning Canada cited more numerical facts, had a greater complexity of reportage, and were longer in time length than items concerning other nations or continents. However, non-Canadian news items on the whole may be treated either less or more favorably than news items about Canada.

One factor which may discourage mass media from concentrating on international news is the possibility that national audiences simply do not care for large amounts of news from outside their own country (MacLean and Pinna, 1958; Sandman, Rubin and Sachsman, 1972; Smith, 1962).[11] This, coupled with the considerable financial outlay which a mass medium or news gathering organization must pay to place staff members throughout the world (Adams, 1966),[12] suggests that to expect other than an emphasis on news closer to home is simply unrealistic. Indeed, Pember (1974)[13] points out that international news tends to be catastrophe-oriented, while Adams (1966) says it "takes little effort to see that most foreign reporting today is being done by wire service personnel." However, Adams seems to argue against the implications of the "Afghanistanism" hypothesis when he notes that U.S. correspondents abroad generally file reports which are sound, well wrapped up, well written, well played and unique.[14]

Turning to the type of news topic carried by a nationalistic mass medium concerning events and personalities of other nations and continents (which was not a part of the "Afghanistanism" hypotheses cited earlier), the CBC data show a distinct tendency to concentrate on the "sensational" as measured by news of disaster, catastrophe, as well as scandals of political, non-political and sexual nature. Table 7 (Appendix) shows 10.9 percent of Canadian news items stressed these themes, while all Asian items, 28.6 percent of U. S. items, 25 percent of Central and South American items, 25 percent of African items, and 21.1 percent of European items featured sensational news topics. Canadian items appear more evenly distributed over seven topical categories, whereas items pertaining to other nations and continents are concentrated in one or two topical categories. For the United States, the distribution is fairly even, but the largest single percentage of items is classified as sensational. For Europe, slightly less than a third of the items focused on the economy. War and peacekeeping considerations dominated the news from the Middle East, Africa, and those items which referred to combinations of nations. This suggests that further work concerning specific "images" of one nation as found in the mass media content of another nation might be fruitful as one means of explaining the "stereotyping" of national character and culture which ostensibly is of great practical and potential importance in diplomatic relations between nations; that is, whether the people of one nation will be more or less inclined to cooperate or compete with the people of another nation.[15] This estimation, of course, will be based on an inference of the effects of the mass media content available to differing national audiences.

LIMITATIONS

Results of this study are based on a small sample taken within a short period of time. Larger samples, taken systematically over longer periods of time would be more reliable and valid. Also, it would be desirable to content analyze more than one channel of mass media information within a given nation, and perhaps supplement the content analysis with survey or experimental data concerning the attitudes and opinions of communicators and audiences. The data in this study are intended to be suggestive only. Larger samples of news items would allow correlation of individual distances of nations from Toronto and the dependent variables. Finally, the data gathered through content analysis should be carefully coordinated with an in-depth examination of the news gathering and news organization structure of the CBC radio news operation.

FOOTNOTES

1. J. Anthony Lukas "Afghanistanism In Journalism" address at a /MORE/ -Twin Cities Journalism Review Media Day, Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 6, 1974. "Afghanistanism" apparently is a reference to the most remote and obscure nation imaginable, although Jolliffe (1962) notes that many "conquerors and caravans" have swept through that mountainous, desert country, including Alexander the Great, Ghengis Khan, and the British during World War II. H. R. Jolliffe "Developing Journalism in an Emergent Nation - Afghanistan" Journalism Quarterly 39 (Summer, 1962): 355 - 362.
2. The reference to "exotica" is not Lukas' alone. For example, Howe (1966) notes: "... there are obvious dangers in area reporting being left exclusively to area specialists ... (and) ... it is clear that the bulk of exotic reporting will now be done by specialists." (emphasis added). Russell Warren Howe "Reporting from Africa: A Correspondent's View" Journalism Quarterly 43 (Summer, 1966): 318.
3. This report will not be concerned with additional aspects of the "Afghanistanism" hypothesis, such as news accuracy, motivation of news reporters, and behavioral impact upon news consumers or their use of such information.
4. Howe, op cit., 314 - 318.
5. Based on personal correspondence between Marilyn J. Sturtridge, Public Relations, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Toronto, and the writer.
6. _____ Mass Media. The Uncertain Mirror. Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, Volume I. (Ottawa, Canada: Queen's Printer, 1970) p. 57.
7. Ibid, p. 195.
8. Ibid, pp. 212, 234, 258.

9. "Item favorableness" is difficult to content analyze. Often, classification of a news item on its favorableness or unfavorableness to a nation or continent seems based on a coder's subjective value judgment. The intercoder reliability on the "item favorableness" variable, however, was .67, only slightly below the summary reliability calculated over all coding categories (.72). Some examples of news items coded as "unfavorable" to the United States include a satirical depiction of New York City as "Fun City" during the beginning of the financial crisis there, in which laid-off policemen and firemen were leafletting visitors, warning them to beware of entering "Fear City." Another news item along the same lines discussed "rats in the White House" (a literal fact) noting, "some people are blaming Richard Nixon." Examples of news items coded as favorable to the nation involved include favorable reports that, for the first time, British Parliament allowed its proceedings to be broadcast live via radio, and another report that the Canadian Commons might allow similar broadcasts. "Item favorableness" is not synonymous with "bias," which presupposes the communicator's intention to purposively present an object, entity or person in a preselected cast. Here, content is examined and no attempt is made to infer communicator intent or motivation. For problems in such inference from content analyzed messages to either the message source or receiver, see Richard W. Budd, Robert K. Thorp and Lewis Donohew Content Analysis of Communications (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967).

10. Scott's π was calculated. William A. Scott "Reliability of Content Analysis: The Case of Nominal Scale Coding" Public Opinion Quarterly 19 (Fall, 1955): pp. 321 - 325.

11. Geographic distance has been used to predict audience interest in various topics by MacLean and Pinna (1958). They suggest, in passing, that "news-

men and other communicators are apt to be influenced in what they select and present by what they think we care about. ... almost an axiom in the news business is the notion that geographic distance from home town is a major determinant of news interest." Malcolm S. MacLean, Jr. and Luca Pinna "Distance and News Interest: Scarperia, Italy" Journalism Quarterly 35 (Winter, 1958): pp. 37 - 38. See also: Peter M. Sandman, David M. Rubin and David B. Sachsman Media: An Introductory Analysis of American Mass Communications (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972) pp. 404 - 405; Don Smith "Is There a U. S. Audience for International Broadcasts?" Journalism Quarterly 39 (Winter, 1962): pp. 86 - 87.

12. John B. Adams "What the Foreign Correspondent Does for a Newspaper's Readers" Journalism Quarterly 43 (Summer, 1966): pp. 300 - 304, 313.

13. Don R. Pember Mass Media in America (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1974) p. 121.

14. Adams, op cit., p. 313.

15. See, for example: John C. Merrill "The Image of the United States in Ten Mexican Dailies" Journalism Quarterly 39: pp. 203 - 209; C. A. Oliphant "The Image of the United States Projected by Peking Review" Journalism Quarterly 41: pp. 416 - 420; Wayne Wolfe "Images of the United States in the Latin American Press" Journalism Quarterly 41: pp. 79 - 86.

APPENDIX

Table 4. Nation featured in CBC radio news item by item length.

Length (in seconds)	Canadian News Items (N = 92)	News Items Regarding Other Nations (N = 64)
Long (130 to 760) (N = 49)	35.9%	25.0%
Mid (36 to 129) (N = 52)	34.8	31.3
Short (to 35) (N = 55)	29.3	43.8
	100.0%	100.1% *

X^2 = 3.78; DF = 2; .10 > p > .05 one-tailed tests; Contingency Coefficient, C = .15; *Percentage does not equal 100.0% due to rounding error.

Table 5. Nation featured in CBC radio news item by number of numerical facts cited.

Number of Numerical Facts Cited	Canadian News Items (N = 92)	News Items Regarding Other Nations (N = 64)
High (4 to 25) (N = 67)	48.9%	34.4%
Mid (2 to 3) (N = 43)	22.8	34.4
Low (0 to 1) (N = 46)	28.3	31.3
	100.0%	100.1% *

X^2 = 3.81; DF = 2; .10 > p > .05 one-tailed test; Contingency Coefficient, C = .15; *Percentage does not equal 100.0% due to rounding error.

Table 6. Nation featured in CBC radio news item by complexity of reportage.

Complexity of Reportage	Canadian News Items (N = 92)	News Items Regarding Other Nations (N = 64)
Newscaster only (N = 82)	46.7%	60.9%
Newscaster plus actuality and/or correspondent (N = 74)	53.3	39.1
	100.0%	100.0%

$X^2 = 2.51$; DF = 1; $.10 > p > .05$ one-tailed test; Contingency Coefficient, C = .13

Table 7.* Country Featured in News Item, and Major Topic of News Item.

	Canada (N=92)	U.S. (N=28)	Central/ S. Amer. (N=4)	Europe (N=19)	Middle East (N=5)	Africa (N=4)	Asia (N=3)	Combination (N=28)	Total (N=183)
1 Economy	19 20.7%	5 17.9%		6 31.6%				5 17.9%	35 19.1%
2 Sensationalism	10 10.9%	8 28.6%	1 25.0%	4 21.1%		1 25.0%	3 100%	4 14.3%	31 16.9%
3 Crime, Prisons	20 21.7%	3 10.7%				1 25.0%		3 10.7%	27 14.8%
4 War, Peace	4 4.3%	3 10.7%		4 21.1%	3 60.0%	2 50.0%		6 21.4%	22 12.0%
5 Energy, Environment	8 8.7%	1 3.6%						4 14.3%	13 7.1%
6 Social Institutions	13 14.1%	5 17.9%	3 75.0%	3 15.8%				1 3.6%	25 13.7%
7 Human Services, Welfare	18 19.6%	3 10.7%		2 10.5%	2 40.0%			5 17.9%	30 16.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

1 = Economy includes categories on industrial operation and policy, labor relations, strikes, walkouts, unions, employment, financial institutions and policies, imports and exports.
2 = Sensationalism includes items concerned with catastrophe, disaster, political, nonpolitical and sexual scandal.
3 = Crime, prisons includes items dealing with crime, criminals, prisons, police, punishment, rehabilitation.
4 = War, peace includes items dealing with war, rebellion, riot, armed services activity, weapons, peacekeeping, diplomacy.
5 = Energy, environment includes items dealing with energy development, shortages, power sources and effects and impact upon natural environment.
6 = Social institutions includes items dealing with the workings of legislation, government, elections (noneconomic, Judicial), technology, including space exploration, civil rights and liberties, and the communications media.
7 = Human services and welfare includes items dealing with health, medicine, transportation, the judiciary or legal system, immigration, entertainment and recreation, religion.

* Percentages calculated on a basis of small numbers should be interpreted with caution, due to the instability of results from a small sample.